

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)
Developing Recommendations for Managing Madison River Recreation
Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee (MCAC) – Meeting #Eight

January 12, 2013

Session Summary

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

Within the Advisory Committee's Charter, develop consensus recommendations around the following 4 tasks:

1. Review and assess river recreation information and existing conditions on the Madison River.
2. Identify and describe desirable or acceptable recreation conditions for the Madison River.
3. Identify and describe conditions that would warrant implementation of various management actions.
4. Develop a list of less to most restrictive management actions.

JANUARY 12 SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Continue to review Madison River recreation data; share trapline comments; hear public comments.
- Work to finalize draft desired River conditions and Fishing Access sites (including the "walk and wade" interest); management actions to do now; conditions that might warrant implementation of other management options; the potential "less to more restrictive" management options that might be instituted under those conditions - within the guiding principles, identified "interests", and any agreed upon "fair standards/objective criteria"; and general recommendations..
- Complete the Committee's calendar.

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Working Toward a Final Draft Products

In the January 12, 2013 Committee meeting, MCAC members revised, added to, edited, and in some cases, tentatively agreed to specific items related to Madison River recreation management. Those items can be found (highlighted in bold italics) in the "Collaborative Framework as of January 12, 2013" document attached at the end of this summary.

Specific Discussion Items

- A MCAC member suggested that the “least restrictive to most restrictive” management actions concept might be more easily understood and developed if the Committee thinks in terms of “mild impacts to users; then moving to varying levels of “redistribution”; and finally, varying levels of “restricting” users.
- The ongoing impact of the Dam renovation was again addressed – particularly related to how those impacts might affect “thresholds” and what “return to normal” might mean when the work is completed.
- The Committee listed the following criteria for consideration in thinking about adding access sites in particular stretches of the River:
 - What might be the effect on “crowding” at possible access and distribution points?
 - What might be the impacts on current “interests”/users?
 - What might be the impacts on other resources?
 - Might the solution contribute to exceeding a “threshold” in another section of the River?
 - What might be other unintended consequences as a result of trying to solve a particular problem?
- FWP personnel discussed current science related to possible effects of open angling areas/seasons on spawning and explained the long established public perceptions related to this issue.
- In discussing possible approaches to establishing a baseline for a particular stretch of River, the Committee talked about the pluses and minuses of using the Angling Pressure Survey that collects data on longer pieces of the River as well as other data sets.
 - The Committee is trying to extrapolate a legitimate baseline from current data – with the understanding that new data collection will “catch up” in about 4 years.
 - Following on that question is how to determine a “threshold” that exceeds the desired River condition and what might be incremental levels related to that threshold that could result in implementing recommended management actions.

“Homework”

- MCAC members are asked to give considerable thought to the following:
 - How should the Committee “legitimately” and “effectively” establish a baseline from current data – specifically for the Lyons Bridge to Ennis River stretch? (An agreed upon approach might be useful for other stretches as well.)
 - How should the Committee determine a threshold once a baseline is established - specifically for the Lyons Bridge to Ennis River stretch?
 - Thinking about Lyons Bridge to Ennis and applying the “mild impacts to users, etc.”, concept, what do you suggest as the “least to most restrictive” management actions beginning when the threshold is exceeded?
 - Once a management action has been applied, what measurement/kind of measurement should cause a move to another level of management action – again, in particular, the case of Lyons Bridge to Ennis?
- Read the full attached “Collaborative Framework as of January 12, 2013” and be prepared to move ahead with other River Sections including Fishing Access Sites. Think about how/where Committee work on the Lyons Bridge to Ennis section and the River above Hebgen Dam section might be useful/helpful with other River sections.

Where do we go from here?

MCAC Calendar

The Committee intends to complete its work by the end of March. Currently scheduled meetings are:

- Sunday, February 10 in the Ennis Library – 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
- Sunday March 3 at FWP Headquarters in Bozeman – 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM
- April 11 - Presentation of recommendations to FWP Commission in Helena (time to be announced as part of Commission agenda)

Public Process related to the Committee’s Recommendations to the FWP Commission

After some discussion, the Committee agreed that a one-location, limited public “meeting” would not adequately reflect public response to their recommendations. Consequently, they decided that they would continue to seek public comment at each Committee meeting; make sure they are seeking input from their “traplines”; and put their progress and product on the FWP website where many more people are able to get the information. In addition, the Department and Commission will seek public comment as they move to developing a formal Madison River Recreation Management Plan – with the Committee’s recommendations fully considered and evaluated in that process.

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)
Developing Recommendations for Managing Madison River Recreation
Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee (MCAC)

Draft COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK (*adjusted in bold italics as of January 12, 2013 MCAC meeting*)

Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee (MCAC) Charter

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is developing a plan for managing recreation on the Madison River. The plan will focus on *recreation* management rather than *resource* management with the understanding that resource protection is of highest priority. The members of the Madison River Citizen Advisory Committee (MCAC) serve by appointment of the FWP Director and are tasked with developing recommendations for managing recreation on the Madison River.

The MCAC's assignment is to prepare a Committee Report on recommendations for managing recreation of the Madison River. FWP will invite the public to comment on the Committee Report. FWP will prepare a Draft Management Plan and environmental analysis based on the work of the Committee and public comments. The public and the Committee will be invited to comment on the Draft Plan and environmental analysis. The FWP Commission will adopt a Final Plan based on the recommendations of the Committee, comments from the public, environmental analysis, and input from staff.

The FWP statewide river recreation rules apply to the process of developing management plans or rules for river recreation. The MCAC's recommendations must comply with these statewide rules. According to the rules, management plans and rules must be technically and socially feasible; legal; affordable; measureable; enforceable; and reasonable to administer.

The MCAC's recommendations should reflect the interests of its members, the public that recreates on the Madison River, and those affected by river recreation management. It is imperative that the MCAC use a process that encourages civility, trust, and respect. Listening to and integrating each person's interests is paramount to success.

The MCAC serves in an advisory capacity. While the role of the Committee is critically Important, there is no guarantee that the Final Plan will follow the Committee's recommendations. The FWP Commission is the final decision-maker and shall consider the recommendations of the MCAC, the best available information, the environmental analysis, and input from the public and staff.

In the process, the MCAC will perform the following tasks:

- Assess river recreation information and existing conditions on the Madison River;
- Identify desirable or acceptable recreation conditions for the Madison River;
- Develop a list of management actions (less restrictive to more restrictive);
- Identify conditions that would warrant implementation of management actions.

**“Interests” (Affirmed by “interests” represented on the Committee
It is in the interest of Commercial/Economic/Local Communities:**

- To maintain a healthy resource because no dollars or fun can be had on a degraded river.
- To set measurable standards for recreational use impacts on water quality/fish populations because these resources are essential to ***commercial fishing guiding/outfitting activity (corrected a typo)***.

It is in the interest of anglers generally:

- To have the mystique and lore of “the Madison” remain – even in these modern times. That includes a world class fishing experience – size of fish and quantity of fish; tranquility because of encountering fewer people; majestic scenery; and a clean, cold water river.
- To not have garbage present that spoils the experience and health of the River.
- To have an educated public who values/demonstrates recreation etiquette.
- To maximize the recreation experience by having congestion and pressure addressed through a variety of ways including having educated users who make helpful choices about locations – particularly during peak use times

It is in the interest of the wade angler:

- To have relative solitude, access, demonstrated etiquette by those encountered, and quality fishing experiences.

It is in the interest of the float angler:

- To have quality fishing experiences that may include quality and size of fish per trip; little congestion; boat ramp access where etiquette is demonstrated; and adequate parking.

It is in the interest of general recreation:

- To develop management actions that are technically and socially feasible, legal, affordable, measurable and enforceable because they will then be effectively implemented.
- To be good stewards of the Madison River (that is, protecting the resource) while still maintaining and accommodating a full spectrum of recreation activities.
- To have the Madison River continue to provide world-class fly fishing and floating experiences and enjoyment for all. By doing so, we will care for the River to ensure that it remains healthy and safe to fish and float for generations to come.
- To preserve the beauty of the River and quality of the recreation experience.
- To develop management actions that fairly address all Madison River interests because that is the only way to produce an enduring and effective solution.

It is in the interest of the Managing Agencies:

- To promote public safety.
- To protect/preserve the resource for the use and enjoyment of present and future users.
- To minimize/manage user conflicts.
- To provide for a variety of quality recreational and educational opportunities.
- To develop and maintain appropriate recreation facilities that balance public demand, protection of resources, and fiscal responsibility.

Guiding Principles (Agreement)

MCAC members affirmed the guiding principles in the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Statewide River Recreation Rules as a tool for establishing common ground. (They are found on page 23 of that manual and are also located in the MCAC member notebooks.) In addition, MCAC members added the following guiding principle as important to their tasks:

- We believe that use levels should be the consideration that drives decisions, not types of use/user (who it is).

Important Items in the “Desired Condition” for the Madison River (Tentative Agreement)

- A healthy and productive fishery
- An accepted frequency/range of encounter among users
- Adequate space as defined by ***“traditional western fishing etiquette” (may need additional explanation; demonstration of angling/recreation etiquette***
- No garbage - 100% packed in and packed out
- ***Maintains reputation as a*** “world class” fishing experience for anglers
- Adequate access and parking
- Ongoing education and educated users
- Seasonality issues identified and addressed successfully
- The least amount of regulations/restrictions that protect the resource and allow all interests to enjoy the River without substantially impacting the quality of other user groups’ recreation experience (e.g., ***people go/do what they want without impacting others.***) ***(corrected a typo)***
- All user groups understand and are considerate of the needs and interests of other user groups and use appropriate ethics and etiquette (e.g., Picking up litter is the norm, not the exception; people observe appropriate distances for each activity).
- Unacceptable ratings don’t exceed an established percentage (e.g., Based on 2009 onsite survey for any criteria) with data routinely with similar survey questions.

(“Continue to allow concentrated high recreation use in the lower Madison” Committee will revisit as they discuss the lower Madison)

General Recommendations (*Tentative Agreement*)

MCAC members have agreed tentatively on the importance of the following regarding management of recreation on the Madison River:

- “River-wide” data collection instruments should provide the capacity to “drill down” on particular stretches of the River in order to monitor/identify/evaluate changes to the desired condition in a timely manner and to query data in subsequent processes.
- Education should be ongoing regarding River etiquette; littering/garbage; adjusting expectations during peak fishing **and recreation** periods, etc.
- Should management actions be needed, ***they should be tried and evaluated*** for 2 years before moving to the next more restrictive level (with public process and to-be-identified exceptions).
- ***FWP should work to influence a more timely completion of work on the Dam so River conditions can return to “normal” and any management actions will be considered/applied within that “normal” context.***
- ***(Still under consideration/being discussed - Some kind of a Madison River user endorsement/“stamp”/registration or... for data collection and possibly funding in the future to support data collection, etc.).***

Desired Conditions; Actions “to do now”; Thresholds; and Potential Management Actions per River Sections (acknowledging an ongoing discussion related to “walk and wade”)

River above Hebgen Dam (Park to Hebgen Lake) (*Tentative Agreement*)

The Committee tentatively agrees to the status quo with ongoing data collection and use ***regulations*** as follows:

- Continue the 2-year biennium survey – “drilled down” (users in space and time) to monitor changes in the current recreation conditions in this stretch to include:
 - Who (resident/non-resident) is using the stretch?
 - How are they accessing it and what they are doing in the stretch?
 - When they are using it?
 - What is their satisfaction level in terms of their recreation experience (i.e., fishing, etc.)?
 - What is their satisfaction level with social conditions (i.e., crowding, etiquette of users, etc.)?
- Explore the “affordability” of opportunities for data collection tools (i.e., person-to-person interviewing through partners; “iron rangers”; survey attached to fishing licenses for those using the Madison; surveying through SRP; etc.).

DRAFT - Hebgen Dam to Quake Lake

While the Committee had been comfortable with the status quo, they agreed to revisit it as part of their discussion about the entire River and the “walk and wade” interest.

DRAFT - Quake Lake (Raynolds Pass) to Lyons Bridge (?to Valley Garden?)

Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

Not yet completed

Actions to do now

- Promote education on the walk/wade section including river etiquette.
- Redesign FWP surveys to measure use numbers on each section per the Committee's general recommendations related to data
- Install "iron ranger" devices to capture fisherman data related to use (Raynold's Pass, Three Dollar Bridge, Eagles' Nest).

Thresholds/Triggers that would warrant increased management action

Not yet completed

Least to most restrictive management actions (*"mild impact; redistribution actions; restricting actions"*)

Not yet completed

DRAFT - Lyons Bridge to Ennis (to Lake)

Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- Maintain the Madison River (and the Madison River's reputation) as a world-class fishery and recreation experience (i.e., River resources protected; diverse fishing experiences; positive and diverse recreation experiences).
- River aesthetics are valued and protected - Have no trash in/around the River; access sites are well-cared for and managed.
- Users wait no longer than 15 minutes (on average) to put-in at all fishing access sites on this portion of the River from the 3rd Saturday in May to September 30 (put-in waiting times outside of these dates are expected to be shorter).

Actions to do now

- Educate the fishing/recreating **public and commercial** community to readjust their expectations during peak fishing periods (June, July, August) to protect the resource and increase opportunities for a quality recreation experience; suggest staggering use time.
- Redesign Lyons Bridge fishing access site to alleviate congestion at launch sites parking.
- **Install "Iron Rangers" to collect data (What are you? Where are you?, etc.)**
- Educate users about garbage/littering.
- **Based on current science related to spawning, open the River above Lyons year round.**
- **(Still under consideration/being discussed - Some kind of a Madison River user endorsement/"stamp"/registration or... for this section... or all the River... for data collection and possibly funding in the future to support data collection, etc.).**

Thresholds/Triggers that would warrant increased management action

Not yet completed

DRAFT - Lyons Bridge to Ennis (to Lake) cont.

Initial ideas/thoughts about least to most restrictive management actions (“mild impact; redistribution actions; restricting actions”) - not necessarily listed in order at this point in the discussion)

- ***Require all floating users “register” and display the registration on their craft for this stretch - no limit on numbers; commercial users register through SRP.***
- ***Explore the positive and negative consequences of expanding the boat use stretch in this “part” of the River.***
- ***Based on exceeding “a threshold”, identify/evaluate additional access sites/design at Lyons and Ruby that would relieve float pressure but also protect the wade angler opportunity/experience (phase I).***
- ***Based on exceeding “a next threshold”, identify/evaluate additional access sites/design at Storey Ditch and McAtee (phase II) to continue to relieve float pressure but also protect the wade angler opportunity/experience.***
- ***Add to registrations (e.g., nominal annual fee (i.e., \$5.00) and/or deadlines for registration and/or capping numbers, etc..***
- ***Consider seasonal openings/closures.***
- ***Implement a capped, on-line/call-in reservation only system for craft use between 8:00 AM and noon during peak use periods (i.e., June through August).***
- ***Implement more formal distribution methods such as defined allocations.***
- ***Close the stretch, banning, etc.***

DRAFT - Ennis to the Lake (dam)

At this point, the Committee has been comfortable with the status quo but may revisit it in final problem-solving discussions.

DRAFT - Lake to Warm Springs

At this point, the Committee has been comfortable with the status quo but may revisit it in final problem-solving discussions.

DRAFT - Warm Springs to Blacks Ford

Desired Condition for this Segment of the River

- ***Manage for high volume, short duration, recreational floating use. (Encourage “splash and giggle” crowd to continue to use this section of the River.)***
- ***Eliminate driving while intoxicated, excessive alcohol consumption on the River, garbage, and public safety issues associated with parking on the roadside.***

DRAFT - Warm Springs to Blacks Ford cont.**"Thresholds"/Triggers that would Warrant Increased Management Action**

- Thresholds currently exist related to garbage. Too much garbage is deposited in the River and at fishing access sites.
- Those thresholds exist now in the form of public safety issues such as driving while intoxicated, parking on the roadside instead of in the designated parking areas, and behaviors that displace other users, e.g., excessive alcohol consumption on the River, garbage and profanity.

DRAFT - Grey Cliff-Cobblestone-Blackbird-Headwaters State Park/Three Forks**Desired Condition for this Segment of the River**

- Preserve the status quo – with no increased access - as this area is highly regarded for its opportunity for solitude and wildlife viewing.
- Allow a limited amount of float camping at undeveloped BLM land across from Greycliff fishing access site and consider allowing camping at large islands near Cobblestone fishing access site.

Ideas about Management Actions for Parking Issues

- Educate users about where to safely and legally park. Primary parking is Warm Springs. Overflow lot is California Corners.
- Create partnerships (i.e., University, local schools, groups to increase education.
- Provide direction by on-site BLM personnel as to parking.
- Parking areas have already been re-designed.
- Increase law enforcement presence.
- Develop a formal partnership with Counties, Federal, State to increase law enforcement, especially on weekends from June 1 through September 30.
- Charge a fee for parking.
- As a last resort for management action, close the site due to overcrowding.

Ideas about Management Actions for Garbage Issues

- Ban glass bottles on the Madison river.
- Educate people about packing out their garbage.
- Encourage continued use of the free, mesh, reusable garbage bags at the sites.
- Add recycling bins at fishing access sites.
- Continue the joint clean-up efforts, by BLM, FWP, Trout Unlimited, the Madison River Foundation, REI and others.
- Change clean-up to 1st week of August to increase awareness/participation.
- Continue Adopt-A-Fishing Access Site program.
- Increase law enforcement presence in order to reduce littering.
- Use a "punch card" system so users leave with garbage they put-in.

DRAFT - Grey Cliff-Cobblestone-Blackbird-Headwaters State Park/Three Forks cont.

“Thresholds”/Triggers that would Warrant Increased Management Action

- A proposal to pave the dirt road which provides access to this stretch of river.
- If there is a 100% increase over baseline in traffic count numbers for two consecutive years.
- If there are unacceptable levels of impacts on the resource, such as an increase in the number of fire rings and amount of human waste on site.

Least to Most Restrictive Management Actions (*“mild impact; redistribution actions; restricting actions”*)

- Establish a baseline at sites for 2013 and 2014 by using reliable traffic counters at Grey Cliff and Cobblestone.
- When the 100% increase in use threshold is reached, design and implement a survey which assesses whether the increased use is negatively impacting experience. (Management action may be indicated by survey results - needs to be defined prior to moving forward.)
- Create a reservation system for float camping which requires the use of fire pans and human waste systems. Monitor impacts on the resource from float camping use. Consider limiting float camping use, if use levels cause degradation of the resource conditions.

Initial Thoughts related to Fishing Access Sites

MCAC members identified fishing access sites most needing attention as Lyons Bridge, Warm Springs and Blacks Ford. Reynolds Pass, McAtee and Varney Bridge were also mentioned as needing some discussion. Their initial discussion yielded the following:

Desired Condition at Fishing Access Sites

- No garbage
- Adequate parking
- Clean bathroom facilities
- Non-hazardous boat ramps
- “Useful” signage (i.e., one large sign; maps; a logo or standard for all signs; not too many; list of current activities)